

## HALF-CURES

August 25, 1957

Scripture: Mark 8:22-26

There is no mystery why Jesus looked on the blind man with heartfelt pity. Even the most calloused cynic is touched by the sight of a man without eyes. A blind man had been led to Jesus; and without the slightest hesitation, Jesus proceeded to restore his sight.

Usually Christ would look straight at a man, forgive his sins, and then heal him; but this time, He used another method. After having made a little mud of saliva and dust, He daubed it on the man's eyes and commanded that he go wash. There was no therapeutic value in the mud at all; perhaps He used this common substance to get the young man out of the frenzied crowd while letting his emotions relax, a chance to speak to his innermost soul in contrast to the vain babblings of contemporary religionists.

Whatever the reason, the young man responded; but when he had washed and his eyes were opened, Jesus asked him if he could see. "Yes," he said, "my eyes are open, but they are not focused. Men look like trees walking. They are all one big blur." Jesus repeated the process, and the man washed the second time. Then all things came into rightful focus, and the blind man went his merry way.

What was wrong the first time? Was this man such a vile sinner that the initial touch with Jesus wasn't sufficient? Why the double dose of healing? After all, Jesus had healed a Centurion's servant by merely saying the words without even seeing the soldier. There is a great moral here for each if he will hear and heed.

### OPENED BUT NOT FOCUSED

This incident teaches that it is possible for us to have our eyes opened but not focused. Coming to Jesus in the initial experience is one thing, but staying with Him in loyal day-by-day service is something else altogether. When the going gets tough, it is too easy to make a detour.

When sometimes the choice is between two goods; when allegiance demands leaving Father and Mother; when one's job is at stake and he knows that he can't shave his face every morning unless he takes his moral stand regardless of consequences when evil men bellow orders that run athwart one's Christian convictions . . . these are the times when it is easy to lose your standing with the Restorer of sight.

The point is that it is easy to have just enough religion to open your eyes but never to bring them into a clear, concise focus of what it is all about.

It isn't so bad for a new-born Christian to be like that. He has been born into a life of spiritual truths that are strangely awing to him. That is why a new Christian must stay close to his divine Parentage if he is to grow with real vision. But any father or mother would be disconcerted if their young child continued to roll his eyes in meaninglessness. So does God. To look at the human race with its attendant miseries without seeing the need speak more of infantilism than maturity.

### LITTLE IN RETURN

The half-cured are those who have had just enough contact with Christ to get all they can from Him and give little or nothing in return. Here Jesus offered the blind man the one thing that he would have preferred to anything else. What price could one place on a pair of eyes if that person were totally blind? But nowhere in the Gospels is there any record that this young man with restored sight became an ardent Christian disciple. No Gospel bears his name; no record exemplifies the fact that he went from that heal-

ng experience to tell others. He may have; at least we have no such account.

We do know this much: that there are throngs of people today who regard God and Christ somewhat as a depository of blessings. We come with our blindness, our appetites, our desires, and use God as the supplier of our needs. When in our needs, but shouldn't this fact inspire a sense of gratitude to get up and serve Him with our restored sight, of filled tomaches or prospered things?

Of this truth I am quite confident: that he who stays with Jesus long enough will soon or late get the idea that superlative living is summed up in how much one can give of his love, his prayers, his substance, his loyalties, his imagination, his courage, and his sweat. The lazy advice to "take it easy" needs to be countered by "All to Jesus I surrender, I surrender all."

#### DIM VIEW OF LIFE

Then it is little wonder that when one is only half-cured that he would have such a dim view of things. Issues run together like topsy-turvy. To see time and eternity in union yet in separation, to see the temporal apart from the eternal is an impossibility for the blurry-eyed. A clear-cut view of Christian service remains a blur.

Do they see a world where two-thirds of its inhabitants can neither read nor write, where one-half its population goes to bed hungry every night, where for 20 centuries the good news of salvation hasn't for the first time made its rounds? Do they ever hear a call from Macedonia to "Come over and help us?" No! Their eyes see only the immediate creature comforts, the satiation of the five senses. There is the hum-drum of monotonous living. What a tragedy that many do not return to their eyes to be focused.

For several years I have contended that the greatest mission field on earth is within the Christian church. Today I am more convinced than ever of this truth: to win to Christ the people who bear His name. The blurred vision is seen everywhere . . . little wonder that both guide and follower are in the ditch. Such is the way the Communists see mankind—in blurred atheism they see men as economic trees walking. A man is nothing more than a servant of the state, a chattel slave, a production unit to serve unholy ends. Jesus saw man as a living soul with feelings, aspirations, and potential wings.

#### EYES TO SEE

For those who have eyes to see it, God is in every beggar, every straying child, every confused lad, every prodigal son. The only way God can be helped is for man to be helped in the name of God. The only way one can place his substance in the palms of Jesus is to place it in the needy hands of one for whom He died.

Let me close the sermon by telling you that the return to Jesus after the initial healing may suggest what once was called "the second blessing." Life runs down to the same old seven and six; circumstances become our masters instead of our servants. Then: what is needed is a return for the second blessing . . . that re-endorsement of the note of life . . . that certain conviction that removes all the guesswork about salvation.

Friends, have you tarried with the Saviour long enough to have your eyes opened and focused? If not, then won't you go now to that sacred spot where He first touched you, kneel and ask Him to focus your eyes on the work He wants you to do. Then you will rise to see clearly the most wonderful thing on earth: God and His purpose for your life!